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September 4, 2012

Mr. Kelly Jardine
28079 North Hwy 188,
Roosevelt, AZ, 85545

Dear Mr. Jardine,

With this letter we, the Gila County Board of Supervisors are providing comments on the Draft Environmental Analysis and Environmental Assessment for the Tonto Basin, 7/K and Walnut Grazing Allotments near Punkin Center, Arizona.

We strongly support the continued Multiple Use Management philosophy, and the inclusion of adaptive management strategies that allow land managers the flexibility to make timely decisions relative to a host of ever changing conditions. We also strongly support the continued use of livestock grazing as a management tool to improve habitat.

With regard to the monitoring referenced within the Draft Environmental Analysis, we would request that the monitoring team consist of a collaborative team with broad representation including range management specialist from the educational community to ensure that the collection, interpretation and record retention aspects are adequately covered. In asking for a review in particular of the soil analysis included within this Draft Environmental Assessment, our own staff does not agree with the observations and conclusions of the Soils Specialist, USFS, who served on the ID Team. That review is attached to this letter. If there is that much room for interpretation within the data and monitoring, we ask that a broader team be tasked with the data collection, monitoring and interpretation to avoid even the appearance of personal bias.

With regard to the socioeconomic factors examined within this document, it is our belief that perhaps this section did not receive enough emphasis. With only around three percent private land, it is imperative that the federal lands within Gila County be returned to uses that generate economic benefit for both the residents and the local governments. While three allotments may not represent a

significant economic resource to the United States as a whole, they do represent a significant economic resource to our rural county. We work to preserve every single business, recognizing that these local business owners live, work, and shop here as well.

Omitted from this analysis are the other positive effects that livestock grazing has on the environment. Local ranch permittees develop and maintain valuable additional water developments that provide for enhanced habitat for all wildlife. Water development benefits the recreationists as well as hunters by providing additional suitable habitat and distribution of wildlife. Ranchers are also a valuable resource to the local law enforcement agencies with regard to being the ones most often out working in remote areas and are often the first ones to find illegal activity on the national forest. Additionally, livestock add to the species richness and diversity of an ecosystem.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment. Since these types of decisions affect the county as a whole, as well as our residents and local businesses, we request to be kept informed and this process continues, and to be provided with all future mailings as well as the decision notice.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tommie C. Martin,
Chairman